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ITEM NO: WH-6

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SUBJECT: THE WEST GERMAN SITUATION

THE BUNDESTAG WILL MEET ON MAY 14 TO ELECT A NEW CHANCELLOR. THE FREE DEMOCRATS HAVE ALREADY SAID THAT THEY WILL SUPPORT SPD DEPUTY CHAIRMAN SCHMIDT. HIS ELECTION AS CHANCELLOR TO HEAD THE COALITION IS THUS ASSURED.

A SPECIAL FEDERAL ASSEMBLY WILL MEET AS SCHEDULED ON MAY 15 TO ELECT A NEW FEDERAL PRESIDENT. DESPITE RUMORS TO THE CONTRARY, FDP CHAIRMAN AND ACTING CHANCELLOR SCHEEL REMAINS THE COALITION'S CHOICE AND SEEMS CERTAIN TO GAIN THE OFFICE.

THE FDP AND SPD WILL BEGIN DISCUSSIONS IMMEDIATELY TO DIVIDE UP CABINET POSTS AND REDRAFT A GOVERNMENT PROGRAM. NO MAJOR

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SHIFTS IN THE CABINET OR NEW DIRECTIONS IN POLICY ARE EXPECTED. ALTHOUGH SCHMIDT AND WHOEVER SUCCEEDS SCHEEL AS FDP CHAIRMAN WILL GIVE A DECIDEDLY MORE CONSERVATIVE AURA TO THE GOVERNMENT.

A MAJOR FACTOR LEADING TO THE RESIGNATION WAS BRANDT'S DISMAY THAT HIS COLLEAGUES WERE REFUSING TO ACCEPT ANY SHARE OF THE BLAME FOR THE GUILLAUME AFFAIRE, AND WERE TRYING TO DODGE RESPONSIBILITY. THIS WAS JUST THE LAST OF SEVERAL SUCH DISAPPOINTMENTS. BRANDT WHAS BEEN DEPRESSED AND MOODY, IF NOT BORED WITH POLITICS. ALTHOUGH RECENTLY HE APPEARED TO BE LIFTING HIMSELF OUT OF HIS LETHARGY IN PREPARATION FOR THE LOWER SAXONY STATE ELECTION SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 9. ALTHOUGH THE SPD DID SURPRISINGLY WELL IN LOCAL ELECTIONS SUNDAY, THE DAY BRANDT REPORTEDLY DECIDED TO RESIGN, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THE OUTCOME [redacted] AT THAT TIME.

A MAJOR QUESTION NOW CENTERS ON THE SPD. THE US EMBASSY REPORTED LAST NIGHT [redacted] THAT GENSCHER, THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND HEIR APPARENT TO SCHEEL AS FDP CHIEF AND FOREIGN MINISTER, PROBABLY WOULD ALSO BE FORCED TO RESIGN BECAUSE OF THE SECURITY FAILURE. THIS MORNING, HOWEVER, THE EMBASSY REPORTS THAT GENSCHER WILL

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PROBABLY REPLACE SCHEEL AS PLANNED, DESPITE SOME BITTERNESS IN THE SPD OVER GENSCHER'S FAILURE TO ACCEPT HIS SHARE OF THE RESPONSIBILITY.

THE SPD PROBABLY HAS DECIDED IT CANNOT ALLOW ITSELF THE LUXURY OF FIGHTING GENSCHER, AS CONTINUATION OF THE COALITION IS PARAMOUNT. STILL, IT MEANS THAT THE COALITION RELATIONSHIP WILL NOW BE BURDENED BY YET ANOTHER SOURCE OF FRICTION.

BRANDT INTENDS TO REMAIN MDH AS SPD CHAIRMAN (UNTIL 1975) AND MEMBER OF THE BUNDESTAG. ALTHOUGH HIS INTENTIONS CONCERNING THE 1976 ELECTION WERE UNCERTAIN EVEN BEFORE THE GUILLAUME AFFAIR, IT CANNOT BE RULED OUT THAT HE WILL AGREE TO RUN AS CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE IF SCHMIDT SHOULD MAKE A MESS OF THINGS BETWEEN NOW AND THEN. AS OF NOW, HOWEVER, THIS APPEARS UNLIKELY.

[redacted]

(SPECIAL DISTRIBUTION: W EUR, NID [redacted]

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